THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (d) The Chairman of the Technical Expert Group (TEG), namely, Dr. R.A. Mashelkar, requested the Government for approval to "withdraw the Report, re-examine, it and resubmit a Report, which meets with the requirements of the highest standards." He also stated that "it will take the TEG three months to resubmit the Report from the time the TEG is given time to re-examine the Report." The Government has agreed to allow the TEG to remove the "technical inaccuracies" in the Report.

**Acceptance of industry's views in the Budget**

1676. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:

Will the the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether pre-Budget interaction between the captains of Industry and Commerce were held extensively from mid-December, 2006 to the end to January, 2007; if so, whether their views were taken into consideration, especially those with regard to abolition of Fringe Benefit Tax higher incentive for tourism, hospitality sector;

(b) whether the industry's plea for developing a mechanism to encourage Indian investment in overseas countries, thus assisting mergers and acquisitions by domestic companies, was adequately accommodated in the proposals sent by Commerce and Industry Minister to the Finance Minister, and

(c) if so, what has been the result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir. Pre-Budget interactions were held with Export Promotion Councils (EPCs)/Commodity Boards, Trade Associations etc. during

2006-07 and their views were taken into consideration while sending the Pre Budget proposals for 2007-08.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

**Package for plantation sector in Kerala**

1677. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to-state:

(a) whether the Minister of State for Commerce announced a package for plantation sector in Kerala.

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the funds allotted for the purpose; and

(d) by when the project is to be started and completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) A Special Purpose Tea Fund (SPTF) has been set up by the Government for replantation and rejuvenation of old and uneconomic tea plantations in the Country, which would also benefit Kerala. The Scheme is to imlemented till the end of Eleventh Plan in the first phase with an estimated outlay of Rs. 567.10 crores to be provided by the Government. Under the Scheme, the borrower is required to contribute only 25% of the cost. 50% will be loan from SPTF and 25% subsidy from the Government. The estimated area to be taken up for replantation/ rejuvenation during the period would be 85,044 hectares comprising replantation in 68,154 hectares and rejuvenation in 16,890 hectares. Out of this, in Kerala, a total of about 12.311 hectares can be undertaken for replantation and rejuvenation during the Eleventh Plan period subject to the growers coming forward to avail the loan-cum-subsidy scheme under SPTF.

Similar schemes like that of Tea have already been announced for other major plantation crops in the Budget for 2007-08.'